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IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

VOLUME TWELVE 1979/80

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

VOLUME TWELVE . . . 1979-80

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The Future of the Irish Baptist Historical Society

by M.J. Dowling

When asked in December 1978 if I would assume the role of Honorary Secretary (pro-term) I had not a single idea as to a programme for the future - and neither had anybody else at that stage, or so it would seem from the fact that 1978 had come to an end and nothing had been done about preparing a programme for 1979. I wish, therefore, to review the work of the Society over the past eleven years as I understand it from studying the journals - my own personal involvement during this period was, to say the least, minimal; then I would like to suggest some possible lines of research and study; and, finally, I would like to discuss the topic of interest in the Society on the past of members of our churches and possible ways of increasing support.

The Past:

In the first volume of the Historical Society Journal (1968/69) Dr. H.D. Gribbon wrote in his editorial:

> "The Irish Baptist Historical Society was established in 1968 to encourage the study of Irish Baptist history and to assist in the preservation of important records and documents, known to exist. Its objects are thus both scholarly and practical."

As Dr. Gribbon comments in volume eight of the Journal (1975/76) the Society's meetings have dealt

> "mainly with churches and personalities." (p14)

This has continued to be the pattern during the few years since that comment was made. As Dr. Gribbon further points out, next in order of frequency have been matters of organisation - the Union, the Home and

Foreign Missions, the Belfast and District Baptist Council, and the Northern Baptist Association, and since then there have been papers on the Women's Auxiliary and the South Derry Baptist Evangelistic Association. These have been some broader topics - Dr. Gribbon mentions Church Discipline and Baptist Education in Ireland, and in addition to these there have been two papers on the effects of 'the troubles' on our churches. There has been only one paper specifically dealing with doctrine - that by Mr. L.E. Deens on the denomination's basis of doctrine. There have been a few papers on subjects not directly connected with Irish Baptist History - Mr. R. Rodgers on the Anabaptists, Mr. W. Rowell on John Bunyan, Mr. J. Thompson on early American Baptists, and Mr. M. Dowling on the Scottish Reformer John Knox. This very brief and incomplete review of the papers presented to the Society over the years might, I think, serve as a basis for considering whether the Society has contributed to the 'preservation of important records and documents', and for considering how much interest in the history of the denomination has in fact been evident in the response to these meetings and papers.

Over the years the Society has had papers prepared by some thirty different people, several of whom have contributed more than once. Attendance at meetings has not been numerous, and later on I shall set out a few ideas on possibly ways of stimulating greater interest and greater involvement on the part of the members of our churches.

The Future: areas to be covered

Let us begin by mentioning the matter of topics of general historical interest. During the past years the Society has had papers on topics, not directly concerned with Irish Baptist History, and at least one that was not concerned with Baptist history at all. Do members consider that this should be a regular feature of the Society's programme? If so, how often should we consider areas of general historical interest, Baptist and non-Baptist?

Next, I think that it might be helpful to circulate the churches to enquire whether they have any materials which might be of interest for future research. A questionnaire could be drawn up, asking for details of church books, minute books, correspondence and other docu-

ments which might be of help to a future historian researching into Baptist work in some particular region. Perhaps this has already been tried. If not, we could discuss the details to be covered in such a survey. The response to it would provide an interesting indicator of the attitude of the churches towards the Society's work.

Thirdly, it is time that an index were drawn up covering the Journals published so far. Such an index could be drawn up by the end of the present year, ready for inclusion in the next number of the Journal.

Fourthly, we need to consider the matter already mentioned of the Society's concentration upon churches and personalities. There is, of course, a need to study the history of individual churches - there is much that is of value in such a work, and the older a church is the more important it is that its roots should be studied and that every possible record of it be traced. Likewise with individuals - men and women who have served the denomination should have their services recorded in this way. Likewise the Union organisations; it is, for example, time for a definitive history of the work of the Foreign Mission to date, now that just over fifty years has elapsed since its inception in 1924. But to return to Dr. Gribbon's paper, printed in volume eight of the Journal, I would like to draw members' attention to other areas of study which have received little coverage.

When reviewing the Society's work to that point (as outlined above), Dr. Gribbon commented:

> "Nobody could argue that in these matters we have gone outside our brief: but I suspect that we have tended not to look at the whole extent of it." (Vol. 8, 1975/76 p.14)

Dr. Gribbon then outlined six areas - spiritual, economic, organisational, political, personal and practical - in which "there are questions one wants to ask." He then listed a number of sources which he felt should be combed for relevant material - manuscript material, government publications, books and periodicals, directories, newspapers and maps. His final comment in the paper was:

> "May I conclude by observing that the work of the Society has done during the past seven years has served to emphasise, to me at least, the wealth of material which

> remains to be examined. The sketchy nature of this paper will be sufficient evidence of the relatively untravelled state of the terrain. Important work and stimulous of fresh discoveries await those who will venture further into it." (ibid p.26)

In an earlier paper, printed in volume six of the Journal (1973/74) and entitled "Some lesser known sources of Irish Baptist History", Dr. Gribbon gave some examples of what could be uncovered through careful research. I would recommend to all members a careful study of these two articles by Dr. Gribbon, as they indicate the kind of research which needs to be undertaken in order for us to have as full a picture as possible of Baptist work in Ireland from the earliest times.

However, it needs to be said that to pursue the lines of investigations suggested in Dr. Gribbon's two papers would require a considerable amount of time and effort. The question therefore needs to be asked: Who is going to do this work? As Dr. Gribbon wrote in his editorial to volume one of the Journal "much depends upon the enthusiasm of individual members". Nobody is going to do a task well for which they have little enthusiasm or which they feel, rightly or wrongly, inadequate to perform. But if valuable material for the history of Irish Baptists is to be brought to light at all, members must give serious consideration to how this work is to be done and by whom. Otherwise none of the material mentioned by Dr. Gribbon will be examined properly, other than that which is needed for the life story of a particular prominent Irish Baptist or for the history of a particular church. Much careful research has indeed been put into the various biographies and histories which have been presented at the Society's meetings, but much more still remains to be done.

The Future: ways of increasing membership and interest

If the Society is to continue to be a viable propisation it needs the interest and support of members of the churches. There are, I feel, some Irish Baptists who do not see the need for a Historical Society and who consider that its purposes and activities are of a less than spiritual nature. This is a regrettable attitude, and one which is hard to overcome because people in our churches tend to have very fixed ideas

on what is "spiritual" and "unspiritual" generally. What is involved here is a matter of careful re-education; some people might be won over from such an attitude and might come to appreciate that the activities of the Historical Society are not by any means 'unspiritual' - anymore than the study of Church History generally is unspiritual. We will always, however, find many people in our denomination who believe that involvement in the Historical Society is quite simply a waste of time and money.

There is also the fact that there are many other denominational activities clamouring for people's attention - quite apart from the demands of one's profession and family life. There are many people who appreciate the value of the Historical Society's work but who feel that they themselves are too heavily committed in other directions really to be of service to the Historical Society. (I must admit that up to now I have been in this category, and probably would have continued to be had I not been approached concerning my direct involvement). In the reports presented to the business session at the annual assembly of the Union, for example, the Historical Society occupies a brief space amongst many other items, and this is one of the rare occasions when the Society's activities are set before the denomination at all. It is only recently, in fact, that the Historical Society has started to present a separate report at the Annual Assembly; prior to 1977 the Society occupied a few lines of the General Secretary's Annual report. The churches are not asked to support the Historical Society financially, and only a few of them have been asked to contribute material for research. The result is that people in the denomination do not feel involved to the extent that they can feel involved, say, in the work of the Missions or the Youth Department, and the impression is given that the Historical Society exists for a very esoteric minority. We may consider it inevitable that only a small number of people will want to be involved, but that leaves us with the problem of who is going to do the work, and with the question of stimulating the interest, if not the actual membership, of a larger section of the denomination than at present.

George Henderson Weir (1894 - 1979)

by J. Thompson

George Henderson Weir was born on 7 September 1894 at Lough Farm, Ballyholin, Aheghill, County Antrim, Ireland, where his father and mother, James and Bella Weir, had their home. George was the eldest son in a family of nine children. Jennie, the eldest child, outlived her brother George by scarcely a week. Two other children, a boy and a girl, died within a short time of each other when they quite young, about four and six years of age, and of some infection which was never identified. The other members of the family were Samuel, William, Mary, Agnes and Jessie. William and Mary are better known to Irish Baptists as Pastor William Weir and Miss Mary E. Weir, sometime honorary secretary of the Women's Auxiliary of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission.

George grew up on the family farm, which was a small-holding of 16-18 acres. His father was hardworking and enterprising. As well as a successful farmer he was a builder, employing four or five joiners and masons, and taking on contracts as far away as Ballymoney. George followed his father into the building business. He studied at Ballymena Technical School, learning how to draw and interpret building plans. He was a joiner by trade, and in later life was probably the only Baptist pastor who habitually carried and often used a three-foot rule! The churches he was later to serve, and many others, benefited from his practical skills and theoretical knowledge. He delighted to ease a jammed door or window, to mend a lock or repair a broken chair.

The family life at Lough Farm was closely-knit and rich. It found its spiritual focus in the little Baptist church at Grange Corner. George's grandfather, although a Presbyterian, was in his later years a faithful adherent of the Grange church. His grandmother was one of the

Raineys, a prominent family in the Baptist church, and herself a lifelong member. George's parents were staunch members of 'Grange Corner' as well. Indeed, James Weir and the Rev. Henry Phillips, sometime pastor of the church, were inseparable friends. The reality of James Weir's spiritual life and testimony found tangible proof in the conversion to Christ of several of his employees. The relationship between employer and workmen was intimate and personal. In the fashion of the time the workmen had their meals in the family home and the Christian ethos of the Weir household was undoubtedly a beneficent influence.

The family day began early, with the parents and older children rising at 6.00 am to start the usual chores of a farmstead. It was not practicable to have daily family worship. It was, however, the custom for the family to gather for corporate Bible reading and prayers each Sunday morning. Bella Weir encouraged the young people to read the Scriptures for themselves, and she prayed for and with them as occasion offered. She had a sense of humour wedded to a gift for rhyme, often amusing the children with little pieces about family interests and incidents. On one occasion, when George was working away from home on a building job, she was writing to him (as was her custom) intending to enclose one of these rhymes when she was constrained to write a stanza or two in serious vein. In such simple ways, with great naturalness, spiritual truths and values were introduced to and inculcated in George (and the others). The more formal teaching in church and Sunday School had its place and influence too.

In talking with George's surviving brothers and sisters one senses the immensely strong bonds of affection between them - a rare and precious solidarity which has not merely survived the passage and ravages of time but has deepened and matured with the passing years. Doubtless, there were family differences from time to time, nevertheless the overall impression is of how a profound natural affection can be heightened and sanctified by the shared love of Christ. If the occasion were appropriate it could be shown how, in the Weir family connections, this principle still operates in the succeeding generations.

George himself, in his presidential address to the Baptist Union of Ireland in 1941, spoke of this phase of his life. 'I would like', he said,

'to pay tribute to my own parents whose love led me and my brothers and sisters to a personal acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and gave to us our first and best impressions of Christian devotion and service.'(1)

Family influences, indeed, were formative for George in his adolescent years, but they were not sombre years. He had a lively sense of humour and recalled with amusement one boyish prank. On this occasion he took some trinkets and pieces of old weathered wood and concealed them in a bog not far from where men were cutting turf. Before burying one of the pieces of wood he scratched the word 'Noah' on it. The cache was duly uncovered by the turf-cutters and a local antiquary was asked to pronounce on the 'find'. The expert gave it as his opinion that the whole things was a 'plant' and, in any case, if the planking was from the Ark Noah would hardly have scratched his name on it in English!

Like any growing lad with a developing mind George had his times of seriousness. He had a careful manner and was accustomed to hearing serious conversation at home where many visiting preachers were entertained. The Grange church, as well, was singularly blessed with devoted and scholarly pastors. His mother was sensitive to George's spiritual concern (as we have seen) and that interest in his eternal welfare issued in his conversion in June 1913.

George was away from home at the time on a building contract. In the evenings, after his day's work, he attended a gospel mission conducted by a Mr. Johnston, an itinerant evangelist. During this mission he came to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. How real and deep the inward change was became evident as time passed. George's commitment to Jesus Christ was to become exemplary. His colleagues in the pastorate and in the affairs of the Irish Baptist denomination, along with the hundreds of people, whose lives were touched by his life and ministry, saw him as a latter-day Barnabas, that is, as 'a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.'(2)

Following his conversion he was baptised and received into fellowship by the Grange church on 21 September 1913. His name is inscribed on the church roll book at entry number 205. Characteristically, he took an active part in the life of the church and became a key figure in its evangelistic witness around the district. So much so, that when in 1921

he decided to train for the ministry and entered the Irish Baptist College (then located in Dublin) James McKendrick, a well-known and successful evangelist at the time, predicted the collapse of the Grange church when George left for Dublin. George's father did not believe the McKendrick prophecy. His scepticism rested on two strong convictions - the Lord, he was assured, had called George into the ministry of the gospel, and would ensure the continuance of the witness at Grange Corner.

The first student to enter the College after World War 1, George Weir devoted himself to his studies under the guidance of T. Harold Spurgeon.(3) He often spoke with appreciation and deep feeling of his student days, which laid the foundation of knowledge and habits of study so evident in his later years. The greatest lesson he learned then was that 'the pastor must love'. He considered love to be the supreme qualification of those who aspired to preach the gospel. 'The Gospel', he said, 'is a love story and can only be proclaimed by lips touched with a coal from off the altar'. In humourous vein he remarked at the same time, 'I know that "love beareth all things" and some people have tested it out on the Lord's servants.' The 'people' in this case were church members and 'the Lord's servants' the pastors.(4)

If one puts together the mosaic of his views on the home, church members, evangelism, the fundamentals of the faith, the College, the pastoral office, church life and discipline, a picture emerges of a man who believed profoundly in the covering-law of the Christian life - 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'(5) Belief and practice, in his case, were close indeed. The consensus of opinion about George Weir is that he <u>was</u> a <u>good</u> man, who adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour.

In his life George wrote many letters, but none is so revealing as his correspondence with his youngest sister, Jessie, in 1922-23. Jessie, at the time, was considering baptism and wrote to her brother in Dublin to ask his advice. George's reply is all tenderness and concern. He refers Jessie to Acts 8:26-39, the account of the evangelist Philip's encounter with the Ethopian statesman on the desert road from Jerusalem

to Gaza, and continues:

> 'Baptist is a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a burial, you and I as guilty sinners deserved death, but Jesus our Saviour has died for us, and now when we accept Him as our Substitute, God looks upon us as having died; we have died in the person of our Dear Redeemer. Dead to sin, dead to self, having given our lives into the hands of Jesus, and we shall always count ourselves dead to the things of the world and self.'(6)

He goes on to speak of baptism as a resurrection, as the path of obedience to the Lord, and ends by saying:

> 'You only want to be able to say one thing from your heart, that you are, as a guilty sinner that could never save yourself, trusting, resting upon, the Lord Jesus Christ and His great work of redemption on your behalf. Now, if you are clear about that, let no one keep you back from professing your Lord.'

It is the final sentence of the letter which uncovers the spring of living water in George's life. He adds, 'Don't be afraid to be out and out for Jesus.' This was the language of his own heart.

When Jessie decided to be baptised she wrote George saying so, and received a warm-hearted response from Dublin. In his letter George shared news of the conversion of a patient he had visited in hospital, the precursor of many such conversions.(7) Jessie was baptised on 28 October 1923. On 27 October George wrote her assuring her of his prayers and joy. 'You will ...', he said, 'have the peace of heart in knowing that you have done your Lord's will in this His own appointed way. He has done so much for us we can never do too much for Him. Isn't that so?'(8)

Incidentally, in this letter George tells of Gipsy Pat Smith's mission in Dublin which had just finished. 'Thousands (had) flocked to hear night after night ... about 700 people professed to trust the Lord Jesus and no doubt there has been a wonderful work done ... as great, if

not greater than the times that we had in Ballymena and elsewhere.' (This is probably a reference to the missions conducted by the Rev. Wm. P. Nicholson).

This correspondence gives an insight into the care, plainness and sympathy which characterised George Weir's attention to the spiritual interests of others. He was 'out and out for Jesus' all his life from his conversion, and many whom he counselled will readily identify in these early letters the spirit of later years.

He still had time for humour. In this last letter he chaffs Jessie and Agnes about becoming 'townified'. 'I'll not know', he wrote, 'how to conduct myself at all at Xmas'. He went on, 'Tell Agnes that she and Miss Graham must stop the letters from boys, or I'll have to report them.' Perhaps 'Mamma' had sent him a revealing rhyme! Yet he ended the letter with touching words: 'Hasn't God been good to us all in making us all His own children and now we have the privilege of unitedly witnessing for Him.'

On graduating from the College Mr. Weir went to Portadown under Home Mission auspices to pioneer Baptist work in that centre. When he moved in 1938 to East End church, Belfast, he left behind a thriving work, which has continued to grow ever since. While he was in Portadown he pastored the little country church at Fivemilehill from 1930 to 1938. In the East End church he continued to manifest the marks of a true pastor, and grew steadily in the esteem of men like John F. Pepper, who were leaders in the work there. During World War II the church building, which was contiguous to Harland & Wolff's shipyard, was damaged in a German air raid on Belfast in the spring of 1941. The church moved temporarily from its uninhabitable premises in Templemore Avenue and joined with the Strandtown church in worship and witness under Mr. Weir's pastoral leadership. He remained at 'East End' until the end of 1945 and was the driving force in having the church premises rehabilitated in a time of dire post-war shortages.

From 'East End' Mr. Weir moved to the Hamilton Road church, Bangor, County Down, where he was to remain twenty years. Again, his pastoral work was outstanding and the church in this seaside resort flourished under his unremitting care, and a daughter church was formed.

George had married Maud Mulligan, a schoolteacher, whose father was for many years the respected superintendent of the Belfast City Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Maud's twin sister, Ella, also married a Baptist in the person of R. Ernest Thompson and served with her husband in the China Inland Mission. Ernest was a field director of the Mission and later founded the highly-successful Missionary Internship organisation, based in Chicago, Illinois.

By a remarkable and sad coincidence both families suffered the loss of their eldest child in accidents. The Thompsons lost Brian when he was sixteen years old. He was killed when he accidentally touched an electrified fence surrounding the Japenese detention camp in Chefoo, China, where missionary families were confined during the Sino-Japanese war. The Weirs lost Jean in a bothing accident on 15 July 1949. An excellent swimmer herself, Jean had gone to help a close friend, who had got into difficulties. While her friend was brought safely ashore Jean, exhausted by her efforts, was drowned. A newspaper report of the accident carried the caption - 'She gave her life for her friend'. Jean had graduated in the Arts faculty at Queen's University, Belfast just three weeks earlier. The great comfort for the bereaved families in these tragic experiences was the knowledge that Brian and Jean had died 'in Christ'.(9) Jean had borne a bright Christian witness among her peers during her college and university years. The Weirs had two other daughters, Mary and Evelyn, both of whom share the faith that is in Christ.

In all his labours in Portadown, Belfast and Bangor George Weir was capably supported by his wife, whose sympathy for her husband's work was matched by her competence in filling the often trying role of a minister's wife. They shared the deepest personal sorrow, but the clear light of their faith and love was never dimmed. Others in trouble were instinctively drawn to them both and received from them only sympathy and encouragement. Life for them, as for all of us, was a blend of sunshine and sorrow, of joy and pain. They were to be 'storm-swept by sorrow'. They were to know the deepest grief. However, it was not by any rationalising about the will of God that they came to terms with the darkest experiences of life, but by a constant love for each other and a confiding trust in the transcendent love of their Saviour. Love, His love, shone for them, and

still shines for Mrs. Weir in her bereavement.

It was fitting that the Baptist denomination in Ireland should recognise Mr. Weir's worth. He held a seat on the Council of the Baptist Union of Ireland for many years, often topping the poll. The Council itself honoured him with its highest accolade when it made him an honorary member several years ago. He was elected president of the Union in 1941 and gave distinguished leadership in this office during a most difficult period of the second world war.

Mr. Weir served on a variety of committees, including the College committee, but without doubt his finest contribution at this level was as chairman of the Irish Baptist Home Mission. He joined the Home Mission committee in 1945 and became chairman in 1949, a position he was to occupy for more than a decade. It was a time of expansion for Home Mission work in the post-war period, and saw an upturn in the activitiies and finances of the Mission. A number of competent evangelists worked among the churches and a long succession of fruitful missions followed throughout Ireland. From 1952 onwards, when I worked closely with him, I saw Mr. Weir in action in a wide variety of situations and constantly admired his clear-headed, sensible, righteous approach to the problems that had to be tackled. He shirked no responsibility and shared every decision. In those days committee meetings began with seasons of prayer, and George Weir was almost always first to pray. His fellowship so spontaneous that one never failed to sense the closeness of his walk with God. He had what William Cowper called 'a calm and heavenly frame.'

After his official retirement in 1965 Mr. Weir was invited to pastor the church at Gilnahirk. This church, formed in 1959 and located in a rapidly developing area of Belfast, had had teething problems - like every other church! The decision to have Mr. Weir as pastor for a period was sound and sensible, and the church responded to his sure, sensitive touch. What was intended to be a short-term arrangement lasted, in the event, for seven years! Mr. Weir showed how versatile he was, even in advanced age. He adapted to a young church with many young people in its membership, drew it together and,

when he finally retired in 1972, left it in a sound spiritual state.

In reading through this paper critically to see if I had overdrawn the portrait of George Henderson Weir I remembered many other things which might have been said about him and his work for God. I found nothing I would want to withdraw, though some things might have be_ expressed more felicitously.

Perhaps an appropriate way to finish is with a tribute from an unexpected quarter. When gathering material for this appreciation I spoke with Mr. Samuel Rainey of Magherafelt, who is a native of Grange. He told me of his own conversion over fifty years ago during a series of talks Mr. Weir gave, based on John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Mr. Rainey recalled that when the Glebe Orange Hall was built in the Grange district it was a decision of the Orange Lodge that a rule be formulated (and it is possibly embodied in the trust deed of the property though I have not had opportunity to examine that document) making the hall available to Mr. Weir for gospel meetings at any time. A motion of confidence which speaks volumes for Mr. Weir's character and reputation 'in his own country'.

With his passing 'to be with Christ' on 25 February 1979 our churches lost in George H. Weir one of their noblest pastors, and many of us one of the truest of friends. Let us give thanks to God for every remembrance of him.

George Henderson Weir

NOTES:

1. 'Serving By Love' - Mr. Weir's presidential address to the Baptist Union of Ireland, 1941, published in the Irish Baptist June, 1941 issue.
2. Acts 11:24.
3. Grandson of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.
4. In presidential address cited above.
5. Mark 12:30-31.
6. Letter to Jessie (Mrs. Thos. Bailie) dated 11 October 1922.
7. Letter to Jessie dated 20 October 1923.
8. Letter to Jessie dated 27 October 1923.
9. This paper was read to the annual meeting of the Irish Baptist Historical Society on 15 May 1979. In the brief discussion with followed, Mr. Welsh Dunn recalled that on the Sunday before Jean's death Mr. Weir had preached from Romans 8:28, and, on the Sunday after, had repeated this sermon at his personal witness to the fact that, even in such tragic circumstances, the truth enshrined in the text was more precious and real to him than before.

"The Grove"

By William Wilson

What is now known as the Grove Baptist Church was formed in the year 1914 - the same year that saw the beginning of the first world war. It was an off-shoot from the Mountpottinger Tabernacle, and the foundation members numbered about 50. Some of these were still alive, and active, when I first went to labour in East Belfast.

The original intention was that the new Church should be the "Baptist Free Church", unaffiliated to the Baptist Union of Ireland. The little group that met to form the Church found accommodation in what was known as the "Willowfield Unionist Drill Hall" on the Woodstock Road. Among the pioneers were names that have been familiar in our denomination since then - Ewing, Cameron, Ravey - men of God who left a goodly heritage.

None of the original group remains - it was left to me to share with the present Pastor in the funeral service of the last foundation member - Mrs. Cameron.

In 1915 the Grove Baptist Mission Hall was opened at the spot where the witness is still maintained, and steps were taken - very wisely, as later events proved - to call a Pastor who was well known and much loved to shepherd the flock and preach the Gospel of the grace of God. This was Alexander Jardine, who had for years ministered to overflowing congregations at the Tabernacle but was at the moment at

Shankill Tennent Street.

Mr. Jardine accepted the call on condition that the Church should affiliate with the Baptist Union of Ireland - This was done to the satisfaction of all concerned. At the opening services two of Pastor Jardines closest friends and colleagues, Pastors C.S. Donald of Antrim Road and James Shields of Milltown, shared the platform and the old building, which holds many happy memories for me and many, was crowded.

I was a lad of 15 at this time - an orphan - living in South Belfast for a year or so with relatives. Each Sunday we went by pony and trap to Newtownards via Beersbridge Road and I can still see the Grove Hall with its large placard with what I thought was a strange surname.

Little did I think that a substantial part of my life time would be spent on that spot, first assisting, then succeeding, one of native's gentlemen, and to me, and many, one of God's giants of warm-hearted, evangelistic fervour.

Alexander Jardine was a big man, with a big heart, - a clear, strong resonant voice, a genial personality - a style of preaching that got to men's hearts. Little children on the footpaths in the area would run to meet him - clamouring to hold his hand. One drunken man, with a bottle of "Dublin black stuff" in each coat pocket - a soldier home on leave from France - listened to a loving appeal concerning his spiritual need and danger as he stopped with Mr. Jardine on the Beersbridge Road. He said, "Mr. Jardine not one of the Kaisers bullets could hit me while you are praying for me." I tell you this to show the love and confidence the "common people" had for the First Pastor of Grove.

The first few years meant hard work and faithful sowing, and among those who assisted in conducting Evangelistic Campaigns were John Lawson, Sarah Palmer and Will Houghton. During Mr. Houghton's campaign the crowds were so dense that people climbed to the window sills outside to see and to hear. This proved a lastingly profitable effort. Dr. Houghton later became Pastor of Moddy Church, Chicago.

The 1920 were sad years in Ulster, with civil disturbances and

spiritual barreness. But God moved in power in our Province. Evangelical churches profited through the dynamic ministry of my spiritual father, W.P. Nicholson.

Grove Church began to grow numerically until at one stage it had the largest baptized membership in our denomination. These numbers indicate the growth of the church in the '20's):

1922 - 170
1923 - 270
1924 - 310
1926 - 315
1927 - 342
1928 - 329
1929 - 347 after transferring 41 to Church Street East.

Some of those converted at that time are still loyal and active members.

Now this is where I came into the scene. I became a Christian in 1921 and in 1922 was baptized by Pastor David Burrows in the Bangor Church were my wife and I are now members. As a foundation member of the Newtownards Church in 1923 I had the joy of helping in ministering in many of our Churches for several years and can recall one year having preached 150 times.

My first memory of Grove was a Saturday Conference in the early 1920's when the old building was packed to overflowing to hear James McKendrick and Harold P. Barker. These were both able and helpful exponents of the Scriptures - what they said throbbed with life. I can remember the singing, the fervour, the warmth of the fellowship, and the ministry of that day is clearer to my mind than what I heard last week. That is not my minister's fault - but at 78 the mind is not as active as in the early 20's.

My first memory of preaching in Grove was one lovely day when the Pastor was on holiday. I can recall quite vividly speaking on "he that winneth souls is wise" - a verse that, unknown to me then, was to be the keynote of my God-planned life work. With much trembling I spoke that evening on the wages of sin and the wonder of saving grace.

My next visit was particularly memorable. Pastor Jardine was unwell, and the preacher arranged for the Sunday morning was the late J.W.S.

Frazer, Pastor of Shankill, and for the evening William Wilson of Newtownards.

In the meantime Mrs. Jardine, the Pastor's wife died unexpectedly and immediately I asked to be relieved of the responsibility on the ground of my youth and inexperience for such a solemn task. The dear old Pastor felt I ought to go, and if ever I felt weak, neverous, and insufficient, it was on that occasion. What a crowd! What an atmosphere! What rapt attention! I tried to sing in those days, and I recall singing an old hymn - about the land of bliss eternal just beyond the river of death, the destiny of all whose robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. The message was based on the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:29 "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end". That night it pleased God to give me my first soul in Grove.

I recall too that it was in 1928 that I was invited to conduct a month of evangelistic services in the Tamar Street Hall, an out-station of the Grove, when over 20 professed faith in Christ - and all this while continuing my daily work.

My first period of ministry in Grove commenced on December 1929. I had been engaged for a year as an evangelist with the Northern Baptist Association - visiting Grange, Dromore, Ballykeel, Ballygrainey, Drunkirk, Conlig, and Poyntzpass. Quite a number converted in those campaigns remain to this day.

Pastor Jardine began to feel that increasing burden of a prospering church at Grove, and his own decreasing strength, and this led to my being invited to come as his assistant. He voluntarily dropped £100 from his own salary so that I might come. The church was to raise £30. One elderly lady on learning that went to the bank and lodged £100 in Mr. Jardine's name - a generous gesture that gladdened my heart.

My Assistantship lasted for three happy, united and profitable years. My chief was kindly, courteous and helpful as a Guide, a Counsellor and a Friend. He taught me the value of personal contacts; He taught me the importance tof honouring people's confidences; He taught me the ever present need of pointedness in evangelism. We met every

Monday morning for coffee, prayer, counselling, and what I learned in those happy hours has been lastingly beneficial.

My first responsibility was to take over a class of young men only one of whom professed faith in Christ, but it was my joy of seeing all but one of the group coming to repentance and faith. One is now a Baptist minister in Wales, one has spent many years as an Army Scripture Reader and was honoured by Her Majesty the Queen with the O.B.E.

My group of boys included the immediate past President of our Union of Churches, and became known as Wilson's Bodyguard!

Pastor Jardine continued his Bible class each Monday with keen interest and deep spiritual blessing, preaching on Sunday mornings and giving me the responsibility for the evenings. As he preached I could keep watch for absentees, call on them early in the week, thus earning the title from my old chief of the Parish Priest!

Conversions were glad and frequent occurrences. Baptisms were seasons of blessing, because if we keep the Baptismal Waters moving there is little trouble in the church.

In 1930 we had a visit from Pastor Alex Galbraith, then of Toxteth Tabernacle whose daughter Maisie married Alex Jardine the Pastor's son, both of whom gave their lives to the Gospel, in South America with the Evangelical Union of South America. Mr. Galbraith's ministry was rich, Biblical, spiritual - laying the foundation for another campaign early in 1931. The Evangelist on this occasion was an American called W.E. Pietsch. He was a complete contrast to Mr. Galbraith, the essence of simplicity, but he reaped the harvest and we rejoiced.
1932 - The old Pastor retired, having exercised a soul saving, God honouring ministry for many years and the good people of Grove sasked me to take up the torch!
153 attended the Church Meeting - 147 said yes, 6 said no because of my youth. But those 6 remained my best friends and stayed until my age deficiency was cured! I stayed on for 3½ more years and saw many converted, baptized and added to the local church. These years were what we called the Hungry Thirties and I am glad we lived through

them. Church members were not as well dressed, and many of them not as well fed, as nowadays, but they prayed and supported the services better. There were full prayer meetings, few, if any empty seats on Sunday evenings, a deeper sense of need. We issued hundreds of 12/ food dockets granted by a Welfare Department at the City Hall. At times a queue waited at our home while my wife and I distributed clothing to children and adults. These were good new garments, the gift of the Belfast Wholesale Clothing Manufacturers Association, one of whose members was Mr. James Guthrie a staunch Baptist and for many years an active participant in Union affairs, especially the Orphan Scoiety.

These years were to me years of hard work, yet I enjoyed every day and whilst I must have covered many hundreds of miles on "Old Faithful", my push-bicycle, I never had an accident - nor had I one day's sickness.

I recall that during this period we had three fruitful missions led by Tom Rea, Captain Wallis and Harold Carter of the Evangelization Society.

I left Grove in 1936 to serve with this very Society, making our home in Glasgow and from that centre going to Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dundee, Kelty, Greenock, Leven, Cleland, Douglas, Forth, Coatbridge - going as far south as Andover, Smannel, Whitchurch, Ludgershall and Bournemouth.

I came back to Ulster in 1939 and served in the Portadown church for 3½ years, succedding George Weir of honoured memory, preceding his brother William, still happily with us.

Now comes my second call to Grove. I received a letter asking that I allow my name to be considered for a recall - this I declined on the grounds that if God wanted me, there would be crystal clear guidance in no uncertain way. Here is what happened:

A church meeting was called, several names were considered, none of whom reached the 2/3rds majority. A much loved deacon, dressed in dongarees on his way to night work in the Shipyard, was at the meeting before "Clocking In". He proposed my name which was seconded and accepted by the church. So that was how the Lord shewed me His Will and on the first Sunday of June 1943 I began 25 years which were

busy, happy and fruitful.

Nine days after re-settling in Grove, God gave my wife and me a priceless gift of a son and to our joy he was one of many who in youth trusted the Saviour and followed his Lord in baptism.

We were encouraged in seeing conversions that cheered our hearts. On Youth Sunday after a message on "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth", a young girl, now a mother, came to the vestry in tears and trusted the Saviour. In the evening and in the week that followed, about 20 young people confessed Christ as Saviour.

One outstanding feature of these years was the Grove Saturday night meetings which attracted large numbers and led some to faith in Christ including a man with a Godly background who came in "intoxicated" but left "in Christ" and lived to prove it.

A man to whom I used to speak as I passed him on the road as he walked with his wife asked, "who is that wee insurance man who always speaks to us? He needn't think we have any insurance business for him!" "That's not an insurance man" she said, "that's the wee man from the Grove." "Well" he said, "we must go along to the Grove". He came and the Lord met him and saved him. He was a brother of Sam Thompson, the playwriter who wrote the play "Over the Bridge".

I think of two men, one 70 plus, one 80 plus, both soundly converted on the same Sunday evening, both baptized on the same occasion - both now in heaven. I think of the business man who was awakened in the Knockbreda Cemetery at a colleagues funeral by the simple quotation, Life is short, death is sure, sin is the curse, Christ is the cure. He came to Grove the following Sunday and at 9 o'clock that evening he found his way to our home - and there found his way to the Fountain open for sin and for all uncleanness.

I think of a lady, still alive who listened to a message on "weighed and found wanting" one Sunday evening, and on Monday morning in the midst of her washing she was converted. Her granddaughter years later was converted as she listened to the story of Pilgrim losing his burden at the cross, she wrote me a letter to tell me her story.

Time would fail me to tell of God's working through Currie Brennan,

John McCrea and John McKendrick, J.A.S. McManus - through our Youth Leaders, S.S. Teachers, Women's Groups, Outstation Workers - a band of patient praying Elders and Deacons. The work was team work and team work pays.

A few weeks ago I stood for the third time in the ruins of Samuel Rutherford's church at Fair Anwoth by the Solway, where Covenanting martyrs lie, and where the Gospel was preached 300 years ago. I thought of Mrs. Cousins great poem based on Rutherford's writings and quoted one verse with one alteration

"Oh if one soul from Ireland
Meets me at God's Right-hand
My Heaven will be two Heavens
In Immanuel's Land."

From its earliest days Grove Church has been an Outreaching Church: Calvary Church, formerly Church Street East, goes back to the twenties when a number of Grove members led by saintly David Miskimmon went out with the blessing (and for a period the financial encouragement) of the Mother Church, to form a live local evangelical church in a densely populated area.

"Grove sponsored two outstations - Tamar Street and Skipton Street, where hundreds of young people have been taught the Word of God and adults brought to a saving knowledge of Christ.

It was in Skipton Street and Grove that our young Missionaries, David and Anna Bowers received their early training.

Dundonald, whilst not strictly speaking a daughter church of Grove has close links. From Grove came quite a few members, including Tom McLearnon who has been a faithful leader there for many years, and many of the others were baptized in Grove.

Among those who went forth into full time service were:

Mr. and Mrs. James Huttton, Qua Iboe
Alex Jardine - South America
G. Olley - Newtownards - Coagh - Canada
R. Glendinning - Knockconny
G. McClements - London City Mission and Ulster churches
R.W. Kerr - Limerick - Bloomfield - Antrim Road

H. Hunter - Armagh
Jim M Haffie - Wales
Sam Jardine - Kilrea - Lurgan Tabernacle
R.W. Graham - Milltown
Frank Ewing - North Africa
Sadie Minnis - Chile
Gerald McClelland - A.S.R.
William Hadden - went from Tamar Street to the U.S.A.
William Forsythe - Canada.

My minister concluded 10 years ago when I was succeeded by Pastor Robert Martin of Limavady, who with God's blessing maintains a faithful ministry to the people in a large area.

If I were asked to mention any highlights in the total of over 31 years ministry - what would they be?

1. The patience and blessing of my never failing Heavening Father.
2. The loving support of Elders, Deacons and Members.
3. The loyalty and co-operation of my wife.
4. The fact that I had an almost 100% health record.
5. The opportunity of visiting most of our churches.
6. A visit of the Land of His Birth as a gift from the people.
7. A joy in knowing two ambitions realized
   (a) The erection of the Jardine Memorial Hall
   (b) The re-creation of a building for worship that brought great joy to all of us.

Now as a Senior Citizen - I give every bit of the glory to God for condescending to take a poor, vile sinner into His family, into His service, and now waiting to be taken through grace into His presence -

"With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove
And aye the devis of sorrow
Were lustred with His love
I'll bless the Hand that guided
I'll bless the heart that planned
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land."

I feel that this ought to be said -
The Grove Church was nourished in prayer, real fervent prayer. The first Pastor's testimony to the Women's Auxiliary was this:- "Much of the blessing attending this work can be traced back to our praying women." I too can look back to years of loyal support in prayer when God's people of all ages came before each service and on Thursday evenings before the Age gap was common - not to listen to preaching but to plead with God in prayer.

For many years - all the Elders came to the vestry and prayed in turn for the ministry of the Word and for the one who ministered especially before the Morning Service. This proved to be a tonic and a source of power. To God's glory I say this that, given a band of praying folks, no task can be too tough, no circumstances too formidable for the most ordinary minister of the Word.

The preaching of the most ordinary individual, plus the prayers of God's people and the power of the Holy Ghost, can produce results today as they did in the days of our fathers -

"It's not a grand Church Organ,
It's not a new Church bell,
It's not a set of cushions,
Nor a marble font will tell.
It's none of these things, my brethren,
That we are in need of most,
But the old Saint Paul Religion
And the Power of the Holy Ghost."

A History of the Orangefield Church

by Minnis Mills

Forty years have passed since the formation of the Orangefield Baptist Church. Upon reflection there is much for which to give thanks. I am glad to put on record that the Church had its origin in prayer and Bible study. In the 1930's it was my privilege to conduct several Evangelistic missions in East Belfast, which among other things, resulted in the formation of a group meeting in various homes for prayer and Bible study. From this praying study group the Church emerged in March, 1939.

The passing of forty years has not eroded the memory of the fervency of the prayers offered, and of the diligent searching of the Scriptures. We were, I think, no less noble than the Bereans of old, who searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so. The purpose of God as revealed in Scripture was our constant study, it proved to be a study in two parts, the doctrines of grace, and the doctrine of last things. God's eternal and immutable counsel, and the good pleasure of His will became an absorbing, enriching, and humbling study. The doctrines of election and free justification in Christ Jesus were very precious to us. We were challenged by the absolute sovereignty of God, sovereign in choosing, redeeming, calling, renewing and preserving unto His heavenly kingdom. Whilst rejoicing in divine sovereignty we did not fail to note the truth of human responsibility, also written large throughout Scripture.

In our study of the doctrine of last things we found ourselves in

conflict with the new, radical and popular interpretation known as dispensational futurism. On examination, we concluded that this theory had transferred great events from this present age to a hypothetical dispensation yet future, thereby minimising the significance of the great new age heralded by John the Baptist, as he cried, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'. We took note of Peter's declaration in Acts 3:24; 'All the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days'. Nowhere in the New Testament could we find where the Kingdom of God had been postponed because of Jewish rejection, and in consequence the church of Christ appointed to serve and witness as a mere parenthesis in God's plan. Such was not Paul's view of the Church: 'God has appointed Him to be Head over everything for the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills everything in every way.' Eph. 1:22,23. As we continued our studies we became convinced that dispensational futurism had in the early 19th century been imposed upon, rather than derived from, Scripture. When forty years ago we considered forming ourselves into a Baptist Church, the Darby/Schofield interpretation was accepted and popular in many of our churches, in consequence we felt we were somewhat out on a limb, and decided to form an independent Baptist Church.

The Church was formed in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lowry of 15 Bloomfield Road in March 1939 with a foundation membership of 13. A building site was secured on the Bloomfield Road. One of our members, Mr. John Bell, a builder, undertook the erection of our first church building. With many helpers, the building was completed and furnished, costing something less than £600.

The first Sunday Services were held on 2nd July, 1939. From the beginning the Lord gave us favour with the people. Members of various denominations attended the services. Some remained with us as faithful helpers in the gospel for many years.

After two months of much encouragement World War II began. We wondered what the future held for the new born church: with the evacuation of children from the City, our thriving Sunday School was depleted.

The enforced 'black-out' made it difficult for elderly folk to go out of doors after dark. During the first German air raid on our city our new church building was set on fire, but vigilant fire watchers brought it under control before much damage was done. During the second air raid a 500 lb. H.E. bomb landed 20 feet from the church, but failed to explode. The only damage sustained was a cracked window. We were out of our building for a week whilst the bomb disposal squad grappled with the monster. When finally removed, there was a hole big enough to bring a steam engine. We had a special service of thanksgiving for our deliverance and the preservation of our building. We felt we were somewhere in the plan of God for good in the coming days.

We were not long to continue as an independent church. God in His providence was moving in to change the situation. The late Pastor Hosford, co-founder of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission, appeared in our midst. He took a keen interest in the progress of the young church, and put to us the following proposition: Why not have independence with fellowship? We saw that this was both possible and Biblical. The church decided to make application for membership of the Baptist Union of Ireland. At the next Baptist Assembly we were heartily received. Now we enjoyed an interest in the whole Baptist witness. It was a decision we never had cause to regret. In later years we had the honour of supplying two Union presidents, and chairmen and members of various committees. We were learning how good it was to have our vision extended.

The war years were difficult. Several of our young men who had helped in the erection of our church building lost their lives while serving with the Royal Air Force. Yet in the midst of sorrow and loss God gave us tokens for good. Our first Sunday School scholar became our first overseas missionary, serving the Lord in India and now in Sweden. Our youngest ever church member, a little girl eleven years old, later, with her husband, served the gospel in France. Our first converted Roman Catholic is now secretary of the Evangelical Protestant Society.

With the return of peace in 1945 I was called to the full-time pastoral oversight of the church. I accepted the call, believing that God had a work for me to do. A service of recognition was held on 4th October, 1945. The late Pastor Forbes, Secretary of the Baptist Union, occupied the chair and extended the good wishes of the Union. The late Pastor Ruddock brought greetings on behalf of neighbouring churches. The late Principal James Willoughby, M.A. also had a share in the proceedings. The preacher was the President of the Baptist Union of Ireland, Pastor L.E. Deens. Taking as his text, Luke 1:77, 'To give the knowledge of salvation', he preached with great conviction of the world's greatest need, and the preacher's greatest theme. It was a stimulating and challenging service. We went forward assured of our sufficiency in God.

Through the years the church grew steadily. Many professing faith in Christ were baptized and joined the church. Another red-letter day in the developing history of the church was April 6, 1968. Church members and friends met outside the old church building which had been their home for 29 years. With police directing the traffic, we walked along the North Road, and took possession of our lovely new building. My wife had the honour of turning the key, and soon every seat was occupied. The overflow filled the basement where the proceedings were relayed by closed circuit television. The act of dedicating the building to the honour of God's most holy name was led by Pastor and people. The president of the Baptist Union, Pastor G.F. Blayney, congratulating the church said, 'From Dunseverick to Cork Irish Baptists rejoice with the Orangefield Church today. The vision behind the erection of their new building was inspired by a spirit of worship, of mission, and of faith.'

Pastor L.E. Deens, who had helped us on so many special occasions, was the preacher. He challenged all our hearts from Psalm 73 on the privilege and need of drawing near to God.

The lines of the closing hymn expressed the thoughts of many:

'Thy mercy will not fail us
Nor leave Thy work undone.
With Thy right hand to help us
The victory shall be won."
For all that has been of God thanks be to God.

The Early Years of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission

Recollections by one of the first missionaries, Mr. Bertie Bennett.

It would be presumptious on my part to write as an authority on the beginning of the I.B.F.M., and further development of the work in the early years of the Mission. This is but the view of one of the missionaries, and in some sense a personal interpretation, which seems necessary to explain how the declared purpose of the Mission at its beginning was never realised. As I see it, the Lord led us in a different way, and we were richly blessed and used both in Peru and the Argentine, in answer to the prayers of His people. Many were the towns and villages visited and Gospel meetings commenced, where there had been no work previously, save the passing of some colporteur, and this latter a rare occurrence.

I am glad that in Volume Two, 1969/70 of the Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal, Pastor J. Thompson, General Secretary of the Union, so ably set forth the events leading up to the formation of the I.B.F.M. He ends that account with this paragraph: "In the years that followed it was soon realised that the development of such a missionary enterprise would be fraught with difficulty. What those problems were and how they were faced, however, is another story."

Part of that story is that around that time in the early twenties, a number of things seemed to coalesce. Revival brought renewed interest in Foreign Mission work. Societies were looking for new recruits. We were reminded that the China Inland Mission was founded by Hudson Taylor shortly after the '59 revival; of C.T. Studd and the heart of Africa Mission; and how that about that time he founded

the Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade. South America was again referred to as "The Neglected Continent", an expression culled from an "Encyclopaedia of Missions" published in New York in 1855. There was also the emotive appeal concerning the unreached Indian tribes of the Amazon Basin, dying without ever having heard of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Committee were led to think about the unreached tribes of inland Brazil. What must have seemed to confirm this was a meeting which took place at Carnlough. Pastor Hodgett of Ballymena was on holiday at Carnlough, and there he met Mr. and Mrs. Oehring, who were at home on furlough from South America. They had with them their family of young children, and were also faced with a problem ... the education of their older children. The outcome was that Mr. and Mrs. Oehring became our first missionaries, the older children were left at home for suitable education, and they, the parents, returned to Urubamba with their baby daughter Hilda. That was in 1927, and they had already behind them 16 years of foreign missionary work, ten years in Paraguay, and 6 years in Peru. Their mission station in Peru was Urubamba, a town high up in the Andes. The river which passes on the fringe of the town, bearing the same name, goes on down to join the river Ucayali, one of the numerous tributaries of the mighty Amazon, and the town of Urubamba was though to be a suitable base to reach the lowland Indian Tribes. Now it is perfectly true that the town of Urubamba could serve as a door of entrance to the Amazon basin, but at best it is a back-door. The way-in really is from the mouth of the Amazon to Manaus, the natural central base of the whole area. This has been confirmed the entrance of missionaries today by plane. At that time, however, even after the first world war, flying was in its infancy.

In the Belfast Evening Telegraph, August 18th, 1931, appeared an article on a big Spanish undertaking, "The Exploration of Amazon (Rivers)" by one of Spain's most celebrated aviators, Francisco Iglesias. The way up the Amazon in the twenties was by boat or ship. A young man, of about my own age, a self-confessed loner even in his boyhood years, was sent out as an exploratory-missionary, in connection with "The Worldwide Evangelization Crusade" to prepare a linguistic schedule of the lowland tribes in the Amazon Basin. In 1927 there was published a provisional classification of 200-300 dialects. He spent a number of

years in Amazionia, and covered in his investigations the areas irrigated by the vast number of tributaries of the Amazon. In the course of his travels, he arrived at the town of Urubamba, and passed the evening, night and part of the next day with us in Urubamba. That was in the end of 1928 or early 1929. I cannot remember the date exactly.

Mr. and Mrs. Oehring returned to Urubamba in 1927. I went out to join them in 1928. How did I get there? The coming of W.P. Nicholson to Londonderry, was in my own case, the restoration of a backslider. To use one of his quotations, I was a "dumb dog that wouldn't bark" (Isa. 56:10). I had drifted into worldliness, avoiding meetings where I might be asked to take some part, even in a small way. How my tongue was loosed, and to what extent, is yet another story. It led me eventually to the Bible Training Institute, in Glasgow, where I could have learned Spanish, but at that time I had no thought of going to South America. There was a Spaniard there, who gave lessons to some. He and some others were going to different places in South America, and in the next room to mine was Ronald Payne, born in Peru. He was the son of the Mr. Payne who accompanied Mr. Creighton down the Convention Valley, past the famous ruins of Macchu Picchu, on down the Ucayali river, Mr. Creighton to Iquitos, Mr. Payne continuing on down the Amazon on his journey to England. It was arranged in this way, an exploratory-journey in quest of Tribal Indians, and recorded as disappointing.

Mr. Oehring in 1927 asked that I might go with them to Peru, but in view of the work intended, the Committee insisted on my having some medical knowledge, and I was sent to the Missionary School of Medicine in London. I would like to record here, that though the Committee had something else in mind, when they arrived at that decision, the time was by no means lost. I was able, not only in Peru but also in the Argentine to render good service to many, even in cases where the medical professionals had failed. It also gave me many opportunities of witness.

The Medical Course finished, I was having a visit to the churches so as to be known and prayed for. Then another strange and startingly interesting meeting took place. It was the last weekend in July 1928. I was in Cork in my swift tour of the Southern churches, when there was

an influx of visitors. This was a number of people returning from the Baptist World Congress, which had been held that year in Toronto, Canada: Pastor and Mrs. L.E. Deens and Miss Galway; Mr. A.B. Hamilton and Miss Hamilton from Limerick; Mr. and Mrs. Hosford from Rosario, Argentina; Mr. and Mrs. Frizelle, who were returning from a holiday in Killarney; and also Pastor T. Madoc Jeffreys, Honor Oak Fellowship, London. It was stated in this way: Cork, London, Dublin, Belfast, Londonderry and the Argentine all were represented.

Before long a new dimension of Mission Work was raised by Mr. Hosford. He suggested that I should go back with them to work in the Argentine. Mr. Gracey replied that such a change was impossible. There was no time even to bring it to the Committee and that my passage to Peru was already booked. Mr. Hosford preach in the Limerick Church on the following Sunday. I went on Monday for an evening meeting to the same place. Both Dr. J.J. Long and Mr. Hare of the Limerick Medical Mission were present. Id did me good to meet men of whom I had heard so much.

So, as had been arranged, I sailed from Liverpool on the "Orcoma" on the 30th August, 1928. Pastor F.W. Gracey, Hon. Secretary of the Mission, was there to see me off. The ship reached Mollendo, the Southern Port of Peru, on the 29th September, and I was met by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Jardine of the E.U.S.A. Alec and I had been in the B.T.I. together, so it was a renewal of a warm fellowship we had shared. I was meeting Mrs. Jardine for the first time. Later, in the interior, while I was still tongue-tied in speaking Spanish, I was to accompany him on short journeys by mule or some other method of transport, to small towns or villages, circulating tracts and portions of Scripture, and he preached as opportunity arose. But that was still ahead. Our time together at Mollendo was brief. On the first train available I travelled to Arequipa. There were three lady missionaries, stationed in this, in many respects, beautiful city, with the supposedly extinct volcano 'El Misti' in the background. All three ladies were remarkable persons: Miss Pritchard, known as 'Gran' for her long service, never took a furlough; Miss Elder, known as her intimate companion for years; Miss Sewell, whom I already knew, being at the Missionary School of

Medicine at the same time as she. Afterwards she took a doctorate in Spanish in Peru. Great missionaries, beloved by all who knew them. Miss Pritchard, decorated by both the Peruvian and British Governments. Again, on the first train available, ignoring the practice for newcomers of passing a week at Arequipa to gradually accustom oneself to the higher altitudes to follow, I continued to Juliaca, watched the people slump in the carriage, and didn't feel too good myself. Next day, I continued to Cuzco, where Mr. Oerhring was awaiting me. Once more, we took the first train available, and in a few hours the journey was over. We were in Urubamba and Mrs. Oehring, with a teapot, soon made me feel at home. I soon learned that though the water supply was provided by the melting snow on the mountains, the sanitary conditions observed by the people were deplorable, and we never drank unboiled water, and that being somewhat insipid, the teapot was often in use.

Now the first duty of a missionary is to learn the official language of the country he is in. Mr. Oehring got me a teacher to come a couple of times a week. What I was really seeking from him was pronounciation, and what on the other hand I was doing deliberately, was getting him to read the Bible. And my like preference for the Authroised Version in English, so I prefer the Cipriano de Valera in Spanish. To me, and I think most old folk will agree with me ... the old wine is better. To recap what already has been said of Urubamba as a back-door entrance to the heart of the Amazon, had we gone up the river Amazon from its mouth, Portuguese would have been the language to learn.

About a year after my own arrival, Mr. W.I. Creighton was on his way out from Ireland. When he did arrive, we did not have a great deal of time together, but made as much as we could of it. I was to be on the move again. From the same port that I arrived at about 15 months previously, and by the same ship, the "Orcoma", I continued my travelling down the coast of Chile, past Antofagasta to Valparaiso, then a couple of days later, by a rare cogged-railway train over the Andes, near the highest mountain of the range, the Aconcagua, to Mendoza. Two days later, a long, hot, dusty journey by rail to Rosario de Santa Fe.

To quote from Mr. Hosford's note, "Thursday, 9th January, 1930 was a

glorious day for the work in Rosario, for it marked the arrival of Brother Bennett. He came at the Committee's request from Urubamba travelling by sea and land. The official reception took place in the Fifth Baptist Church, Saturday 11th January, 1930. An immense crowd of native converts were present, and also Veteran Missionary Dr. Sidney M. Sowell."

I soon found myself engaged in a round of activities, meetings of all kinds and in different places, tract distribution and visitation. An added meeting came into being, without any suggestion on my part. A Friday night Bible Class for young men, of which I was to be the leader. The young women of the Church complained that they were shut out, and so it was made open to all who cared to come. What was our theme of study? What else but "The Acts of the Apostles", the proclaiming of the Gospel, what we may in a sense say is the one unfinished book of the Bible. Even in the early days, there was the tendency to sit down, and stay put, and the disciples needed in some cases to be pushed out (Acts 8:4) "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." (Acts 11:19-27).

The time arrived when, with a recently converted Argentinian, Orlando R. Avalos, 18 years of age, as a companion, we set out on an itinerary to La Quiaca on the border of Bolivia. We obtained special rail tickets and covered some 30 towns and villages in the circulation of a little Gospel paper specially prepared for the journey. Some 50,000 copies of these papers, thousands of Gospels and hundreds of New Testaments circulated with many conversations. The distance and time taken, more than 1,400 miles there and back over a period of three months. Again and again we spoke to people, in many of these places visited, who had never seen a New Testament or Bible and did not know what they were. They had never heard of the Holy Scriptures. What a joy it was to bring them the message of life!

The experience gained by this trip revealed the accessability of many towns and villages that were without any Gospel witness, the building of railways a real boom to the furtherance of the Message of Salvation. It is true that the Brethren had strategically occupied

the capital cities of the Provinces, each of these cities bearing the same name as the Province. It is equally true that they faced tough opposition from Rome, one missionary or a married couple beginning an entirely new work. Sometimes, the work prospered more in the surroundings, than in the place where they lived, and the Province was greater than could be worked, let alone possessed. There were towns of four or five thousand people, or even more, with not a meeting of believers.

Having made the journey to La Quiaca and back to Rosario, accompanied by Orlando Avalos, I felt I had to go back again. This time I went alone, passing many of the towns we had visited the previous year, and going further on. So, instead of going to La Quiaca I took a branch line at Perico to San Pedro, Ledesma, Embarcacion, Tartagal, Aguaray, Yacuiba to Villa Montes on the river Pilcomayo. The latter part of the journey was on top of a motor-truck over a poor road into Bolivia on bags of foodstuff. It was at Villa Montes that I met a missionary of the S.A.M.S. Mission, whose name now slips my memory. He had been a Lieutenant-Commander in the Navy in the First World War. He asked me where I was going. I replied I was waiting for a truck to take me to Charagua and then on to Santa Cruz. He said; "Charagua is just another town like this. Come on back with me to our station in the Chaco, you'll do them good." I was afterwards glad I listened to him, and a truck going the way I had come, got to us before one going the other way. But that night we went out to give Gospels and tracts in the centre of the town. Such a crowd gathered to receive them, that I began to preach. Afterwards a young Bolivian soldier came back with us to the inn where we were staying. My friend said to me, "You speak to him, your Spanish is better than mine." Picking up a card with some texts on it, and praying inwardly, I began to apply the texts. The lad, a believer had got astray. After talking to him for a time, we got down and prayed, first I in Spanish, and then the lad prayed in what was to me an unknown tongue. He left shortly after. My new found friend said to me, "Just to let you know ... You said to that young fellow just what he needed." He knew the Indian language. So I

accompanied him to the Mission Station in the Chaco, the kind I can describe as more or less similar to what we understand as compounds in missionary books: a number of buildings in a circle, several as dwelling places for the missionaries, a store for keeping food and other necessary things, a small medical store, and a little church building, and a reserve building with bed etc. for a visitor like myself.

Now, there are many things we know and hear about, but until we actually see for ourselves, we do not grasp their significance, and all the meticulous painstaking labour and patience and dedication that is required. Here at Algarrobal I was seeing for the first time the real difficulties of reaching Indian tribes with the Gospel. The Indians are nomadic. They may have signs and ways of thoughts communicating by marks, placing of stones, when separated. The missionaries, who go to them, may communicate to some extent through an interpreter, but there is always the doubt whether the interpreter can be really trusted to interpret correctly, especially if he himself does not respond to the Gospel. The missionary has to learn the language in speech, reduce it by some system of phonetics to writing, then teach the Indians to read their own language, and his job is not done until he can give them the Holy Scriptures in written form. I happened to be at Algarrobal, when the first consignment of the New Testament arrived in the Mataco language. It was to me a wonderful thing to possess such a book. Unfortunately, somewhere it was lost. Many Indians of different tribes come down out of the Forests for the sugar cane Harvest. They obtain employment cutting the cane during the Sugar Harvest. Apart from these considerations, and the need for specially, gifted men, with a flair for languages, there was the question of so many dialects, and the very fact that humanly speaking we could not produce the finance necessary. We know that the Lord can supply every need, but the very title of our Mission limited our constituency of support. Other societies were uniting as in the case of the E.U.S.A. Not only that but we were by-passing great needs within reach. I am stating this after years, without any clear knowledge about the Peruvian Missionary work. I have no idea of how

much of Holy Scripture has been translated into the Quechua and Aymara languages. My short time of little more than a year does not qualify me even to raise the question. But it is true, however, long we have to wait for it, the mission and the missionaries have not completed their work until they can pass on the Scriptures in the language of the people among whom they are working.

Recently, in the Newsletter a letter appeared from the Executive Director of the British and Foreign Bible Society that out of the 1,500 languages spoken in Africa, about 1,000 have not yet been reached with Bible Translation.

I still have in my possession a copy of the Gospel according to John in the Dialecto Izoceno de la lengua Guarani. A tentative Edition.

With halts at different places, I was able to pass through the Gran Chaco, on a new stretch of railway to Formosa, and from there to Asuncion, the Capital of Paraguay. Finally on this journey returning to Rosario by steamer down the river Paraguay which joins the river Parana at Corrientes. This account of travelling grows too lengthy to relate the need of the Gospel in many places I passed through, and the oneness that united true evangelicals (missionaries) because they were few.

After a short time in Rosario, I was asked by the Committee to come home and fully consult with them. We though it best to form a chain of stations from Peru to Rosario in the Argentine.

That there would be problems and modifications, if the Lord so indicated, we knew, but the main idea was sane, using the railway, and adapting our procedure to avoid other work already being carried on. We understood that Canadian Baptists were in some places in Bolivia. This was the acceptable role from the Argentine Base.

In my own particular case, on returning in 1932 to the Argentine, I decided to go to Pinto. So after a brief say in Rosario, going the rounds of the outstations of the Church, preaching a few times, I set out on the journey of about 300 miles (the whole length of Ireland). More than two years had passed since Avalos and I had such a thrilling experience there. That the Lord had guided me was unmistakable. I got suitable quarters, and in a remarkable way had it proved to me. The

Lord's people were praying. I was in the right place. The chief ... was with young people in a Sunday School. The older folk, though the, welcomed me when visiting, seemed reluctant to come to meetings until I hit on the idea of lantern-lectures. In Ireland I had been given a splendid set of lantern-slides on John Bunyan's "Pilgrims Progress"; night after night the place was packed to overflowing.

Remembering this years after, in the hot summer nights in Santiago, I showed the same set of pictures on the white-washed gable of a house. The crowds stood round and heard the Gospel (according to Bunyan and the Word of the Lord).

But inbetween, I got married and needed better living quarters in a larger centre. Anatuya was the place. I gave a Bible to each of the young folk who came to the Sunday School in Pinto. Years after I met a young man. He and his sister had both trusted the Lord. He came to see me later when he heard I was in Rosario.

Mr. Hosford, following the plan, started the work in San Lorenzo, about 15 miles north of Rosario, with outstations in Juan Ortiz and Puerto San Martin. This was an area where the Bible-woman, dona Rosa de Bettin, and a book could be written about her, laboured for many years. But she also continued visiting in other places - in Rosario, in the out-station in Barrio Begrano, etc. - a great winner of souls. Rafaela, a nice city further north became another centre of witness. A young Christian, Lanzotto, and his wife, went there to live, he having obtained suitable work, and his wife being a qualified midwife. A large room or store was rented in a suitable place and meetings were commenced. Mr. Hosford and others would visit from Rosario, and I would do the same, travelling south. It was here that Pedro Llula was won to the Saviour. He became an enthusiastic evangelist and so San Cristobal Gospel Meetings were commenced with Tostado as an outstation, all these places in a northerly direction. The chain was coming into being.

The I.B.F.M. work was principally confined to certain areas of the two provinces, Santa Fe and Santiago, though the influence and witness of the missionaries and workers extended much further afield. The

churches formed became linked up with the other Baptist Churches in the National Union of Baptist Churches, known as the "Convencion Bautista Argentina."

The headquarters of the Mission's activities were at Rosario, a city whose population has practically doubled in the last 30 years. It has now a population of 800,000. Two churches were formed in the city, in Calle Urquiza and Barrio Begrano, no attempt being made to increase this number, so as to follow a policy of striking out in a northerly direction. But the witness of the churches, in different ways, covered great areas of the city and out-stations were formed in different districts.

To give some idea of the nature of these visits lasting for a few days, or at times for an evangelistic mission lasting a week or two, sometimes more, distances must be taken into account, San Lorenzo being about 15 miles north of Rosario, Rafaela about 100 miles, San Cristobal 200 miles and Anatuya 380 miles.

National workers as well as foreign missionaries were involved in this work. Wise missionaries come to see that they are but links; that eventually the converted national takes over. Mr. Hosford often said, most rightly, that the day would come when the Argentines would evangelize Europe. In some measure that has been realized and he said it in the days when there was no swift travelling by plane. This ties in with some words one of the lecturers said to us in the B.T.I. and kept repeating, so that we would not forget: "It's not for you to do all the work yourselves. Your job is to multiply the workers."

The Argentine Republic is the size of Western Europe and today has a population of 25,000,000 and is considered one of the fatest growing countries in the world.

I have written at great length, perhaps at times not with clarity. But like the writer of the letter to the Hebrews: 11:32 "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell..."

The Protestant Crusade in Ireland 1800 - 1870

Desmond Bowen Gill and Macmillan
McGill Queen's University Press
PP 412 £10.00.

Review Article by H.M. Carson.

This is a significant contribution to an understanding of nineteenth century Ireland and particularly of the clash between Evangelical missionary efforts and Roman Catholic traditionalism. It is, as a result, of great value, not only in unravelling the present tangled complexities of Irish life, North and South, but in showing the lessons to be learnt by those concerned with evangelism today, as they see some of the failures as well as some of the successes of the past.

Early nineteenth century Ireland was still dominated by the English ascendancy which meant also the Protestant ascendancy. To avoid confusion it is important to remember that the term 'Protestant' really meant 'Church of Ireland.' Baptists and Independents were not 'Protestants' but 'Dissenters' and were viewed as such by the Anglicans, whose attitude varied from the disdain extended to despised sectarian groups, to the patronising fellowship of Anglican evangelicals.

Certainly the 'Dissenters' were small in numbers. While the Methodists had made some inroads through the vigour of their Irish speaking preachers. Congregationalists by the middle of the century could only muster 24 churches and the Baptists sixteen, most of these in the North. One commentator in 1867 said that 'with the exceptions of the Presbyterians and the Wesleyans, Protestant dissent in Dublin may be regarded as all but extinct' (P.37).

Why did they fail? One suggestion is that whereas in England nonconformity flourished because it met the needs of the population whereas in Ireland 'the prevailing evangelical theology of the Church of Ireland gave those who might have been Dissenters in England, an acceptable spiritual home in the establishment.' (P.38)

The Presbyterians with all their strength in the North seemed unconcerned to reach Romans Catholics in the South with the Gospel. There is a damning indictment of their attitude: 'Wherever the Presbyterians founded churches they were more apt to compete with the local Parson for the allegiance of the local Protestant population than they were to preach to the papists. Ulster Presbyterianism was primarily concerned for the survival of the reformed faith in a state of "vital godliness" and for the maintenance of Ulster's Protestant culture'. (P.34)

What then of the situation in the Church of Ireland? It was here, surprising as it may seem today, that the great evangelistic movement was mojnted to try and convert Ireland. The Anglican evangelicals were certainly not lacking in vision. Their hopes were set on a national turning from Rome to the reformed faith. This book is a record of their rearly remarkable successes and of their ultimate failure.

In the early years the Church of Ireland looked an unlikely institution for evangelistic enterprise. Its bishops were largely drawn from English aristocratic families, some of them more notable for worldiness than godliness, and for absence from their dioceses than for pastoral care. The clergy were very much the arm of the English establishment as it tried to turn Ireland with its Gaelic and Catholic culture into an integral part of an English kingdom. So the parish clergyman was seen as a resident gentleman bringing civilising influences to bear in a land where the wretched proverty of the peasants was matched by their barbarism.

Protestants (and the term is throughout this review used in its nineteenth century sense of Anglican) faced a Roman Catholic majority. The only hope was to remain united. As a result there was a great reluctance to leave the Church of Ireland for Dissent. This reluctance, still seen today, is rooted deep in the Southern Protestant's psyche, and stems from the days of what Professor Bowen calls 'the garrison

mentality' of the Church of Ireland. After the disestablishment crisis of 1870 the mood changed to what he terms 'a ghetto mentality' but this only accentuated the need to remain within the Church of Ireland.

The early decades of the century were marked by the increasing bitterness over the issue of tithes. To the Irish Roman Catholic the Established Church was not only a heretical body but a foreign institution imposed by an alien nation. Yet the peasants were forced to pay tithes to maintain its clergy. Their own abject poverty often contrasted markedly with the standard of living of the clergy whom they supported with such bitter resentment. Refusal to pay only resulted in the police being called in to enforce payment. One of the most notorious incidents was in 1834 in Co. Cork where detachments of troops and a large police force fought a bayonet versus pitchfork battle with the peasants, a number of whom were killed or wounded. Meanwhile the Archdeacon whose tithe requirements were the cause of the riot was able to force an entrance through the barricades to collect his forty shilling tithe from a widow. One need not be surprised at the intense bitterness which tithes elicited; and it is good to remember that Dissenters shared this to some extent as they were also forced to pay to maintain the clergy of the Church of Ireland.

It was in this situation that a powerful new evangelical force emerged. Alexander Dallas was an English evangelical clergyman. He was deeply influenced by the rise of pre-millenial views which at that period were not only moulding the newly emerged Brethren movement, but were being accepted by many evangelicals. Like many interpreters of prophecy he saw its fulfilment in his particular period, and like many others would have been incredulous to think that we might still be here over a century later! So he wrote in 1861 'Italian affairs are hastening rapidly to a great crisis ... Prophecy is rapidly fulfilling; the purposes of God are being speedily accomplished and we cannot doubt that the great event of all is near, and that the Lord is at hand.' (P.248)

Dallas operated in the context of the Anglo-Catholic movement in England which swept very many to Rome and seemed to set to Romansise the Church of England. At the same time the great influx of Irish immigrants

gave Rome a new power in England. The Evangelicals were alarmed. The answer in Dallas' view was to reach into Rome's heartland in the South of Ireland. So in January 1846 a massive postal assault was mounted and 90,000 tracts with the title 'A voice from Heaven to Ireland' were despatched. It was the first step in what was to be a militant evangelistic enterprise.

There were already evangelicals at work in the Church of Ireland. Archbishop Trench who had been converted fourteen years after he became Bishop of Waterford, moved to Tuam in 1819 and encouraged Irish speaking evangelicals to pursue a vigorous evangelistic ministry. Edward Nangle in Achill was one of the most notable of the ardent evangelists in Connaught, which soon began to see great numbers of converts leaving Rome. Protestant churches had to be built to house the converts. The movement also spread in Munster and all over the South the Irish Church Mission workers were seeing a tide of blessing. But it is important to note that they were entering into a situation where already, especially in Connaught, there had been a remarkable movement.

One major setback was the disaster of the famine years. During that grim period the English evangelicals raised support in a generous scale. I was most interested to read that a predecessor of mine, Joseph Fenn, who was vicar of St. Michaels Blackheath raised '£30 - 40 weekly for the starving Irish people' - a remarkable sum considering the value of such a figure then (P.181). The evangelicals were accused of 'souperism'; yet their motives were not only evangelistic but genuine concern to alleviate the misery.

It was however the post-famine years which brought the real setback, for it was then that emigration rose like a tidal wave and tens of thousands left Ireland. The first movement from the bottom of the economic ladder went to Glasgow and Liverpool. Then came the second flow to the new world, with its disillusioned young farmers who left behind a land ruined, in their view, by the English. It was this which produced the Irish American hostility which still motivates such men as Tip O'Neill and Edward Kennedy. It also took many of the converts to be a power for strengthening the young churches in North America.

A further major reason for failure - and it is here that we have much to learn - is that Dallas and his friends failed to distinguish between the Gospel and their English culture. The latter they felt was an expression of their Gospel and both were good for Ireland. They hoped not only for a Gospel loving population, but for a peaceful development of what would be a submissive area of the United Kingdom. But the Irish population was not simply Roman Catholic. Its Catholicism had become intertwined with national survival. Its culture was not only Gaelic but was knit with Catholicism. It was right that the evangelicals should preach the gospel and wean men and women from the errors of Rome. The tragedy was that they seemed to see this as involving a repudiation of Irish nationalism, and a rejection of Gaelic culture. It is a tragedy which has a strangely contemporary note in our present Ulster situation.

Meanwhile the aggressive evangelism of Dallas and his colleagues led to another reaction which was to have powerful effects on the Roman church itself. It was the period when traditional Roman Catholicism was moving to its greatest triumphs with the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and of Papal infallibility in 1870. The appointment of Paul Cullen as Roman Catholic primate brought to Irish affairs a prelate utterly committed to traditional hard-line Roman Catholicism. Cullen saw the apparently irresistible advance of the evangelicals and planned to stem their progress. The result was his development of an Irish Roman Catholicism totally wedded to the traditions, dogmas, and claims of the ultramontane position.

It was this counter-reformation Catholicism which saw the Evangelicals halted, which tasted the triumph of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish church, and which soon controlled national life both in its political thinking and cultural development. As a result, the movement of late nineteenth century nationalism became increasingly a Catholic development; so that the independent state which was ultimately to emerge was the creation, not so much of political radicals cast in the mould of the 1898 rebels, but of men for whom religious commitment, cultural identity, and national consciousness were inextricably blended.

Meanwhile the Protestants of the South moved into their religious and cultural ghetto, where they became a relic of a vanished glory,

maintaining within their own restricted communities an alien cultural tradition. In the North the Presbyterians, increasingly suspicious of the new Catholic nationalism, turned from their traditional republicanism to make common cause with the orange order which had been predominantly Church of Ireland. The two nations faced each other in bitter hostility. The Gaels and the Anglo-Scots pursued their seperate cultural paths, and pressed on towards their very different political goals. The stage was set for the tragic denouement of the twentieth century in which we are now the participants. The question which faces us insistently is whether we are able to learn the lessons of the past, or whether we are to be as blind as some of our forebears, and to think that an English culture and a unionist commitment are the only options open to an Evangelical.

Book Review

by Robert Dunlop, minister of Brannockstown Baptist Church.

"JOHN RUSKIN AND ROSE LA TOUCHE" Her unpublished diaries of 1861 and 1867 by Van Akin Burd, Emeritus Professor of English at the State University of New York. Published by Oxford University Press at £6.95.

The history of evangelicalism in Ireland, and in particular the Baptist contribution to the cause of the Gospel, is incomplete with reference to John La Touche of Harristown House in Co. Kildare. The "Master", as he was known was born into a family which traced their Huguenot origins to the Loire Valley, coming to Ireland after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The La Touches founded banking in Dublin and were wealthy landlords in 19th Century Ireland. The Kildare section of the family lived in the spacious Georgian mansion set in the heart of the Harristown Demense on the banks of the Liffey. It is here that the saga recorded in this book was worked out in the second half of the 19th Century.

Professor Burd has documented his material with skill and care. He is most careful in his handling of the spiritual strands of the story and is balanced and fair in his assessment of the impact of Spurgeon's preaching upon the life of John La Touche. Various records of Mr. La Touche's conversion are cited and reference is made to the fact that the Master of the Kildare Hounds was, in the words of his wife, "rescued from the blighting narrowness of a life entirely given to sport". Burd holds that "La Touche had begun listening to Spurgeon in the winter of 1857, and soon he was demonstrating his desire to serve Christ". He concludes that "Hearing Spurgeon's sermons on faith and believers' baptism La Touche may have begun to experience that spiritual regeneration which Spurgeon preached in 1857 as prerequisite for conversion". With clear conviction he shows that "La Touche's embrace of Calvinism was no

inheritance from his mother's relatives (his uncle was Archbishop Trench of Tuam, leader of the evangelical party of the Irish Church) but a genuine response to Spurgeon's arguments". Without the spiritual awakening of the Master of Harristown it is unlikely that this book would ever have been written.

John Ruskin was born into an evangelical family and knew Spurgeon personally, he later castigated him for "preaching to that herd at Newington". His scepticism was well developed during this seventeen year association with La Touche's younger daughter, Rose. His growing antipathy to Evangelicalism became one of the main wedges between Ruskin and the La Touches. His infatuation with Rose began when she was only twlve and was to continue as long as she loved. The publication of her spiritual autobiography in her diary of 1st January - 24th February 1867, reveals the intensity of her faith ..."as I grew older I listened and took in all my Father's doctrines ... He taught me that there was but one thing needful, one subject worthy of thought, one aim worth living for, one rule of conduct, namely God's Holy Word. I saw and believed how the eternal things passed and surpassed in value all in this mortal life". This well documented volume throws new light on a great story and provides useful insights into God's dealings with a remarkable family. It is most refreshing to have the unseen workings of the Spirit treated with respect by a skilled historian. As the work of the Gospel is carried on at Brannockstown Baptist Church, founded and erected by John La Touche, the spiritual influence of the "Master of Harristown" is kept alive.
